

Metro Social Services Board of Commissioners
Meeting Summary
of
June 15, 2016

Board Members Present: William Harris, Frank Boehm, Steve Meinbresse, Michael Bradley, Steve Turner and Charlotte Peacock

Board Members Absent:

Metro Legal Advisor:

Mayor Liaison:

Renee Pratt opened the Metro Social Services (MSS) Board Retreat with a video introduction of MSS staff prepared by Russ Anthony. Ms. Pratt then informed the commission on the order the MSS Board of Commissioners Retreat.

Prior to MSS Budget report, Ms. Pratt stated that it was proposed in the last budget that MSS would not ask for any new incentives. Ms. Pratt stated that she was very hopeful that MSS could reallocate those funds from the Homemaker Program to Family Support. MSS was not allowed to reallocate those funds because the Mayor had other priorities for the use of the funds, such as affordable housing, tiny houses for the homeless and job incentives for youth. However, MSS has been given permission to consider moving some of the available funds from salaries. This request has been submitted to the Director of Finance for review, and Ms. Pratt will report on this at the next board meeting.

Finance (Lisa Ricketts)

Lisa Ricketts reported that for by 2015-2016 year end, there was a total of \$7,908,300 in expenditures, with 86% being Metro funds, 13% grant fund and customer/donation is less than 1%. Funds not used by the end of the year will be returned to general funds. The only two funds that MSS has are the Special Donations Fund (Camilla Caldwell Fund and Meals on Wheels) and Metro Homeless Donation Fund (Project Homeless Connect, How's Nashville and MDHA CDBG Grant).

Lisa Ricketts then provided a summary of all the contracts through the end of the year. The burial fund will be \$70,000 over budget and all the other contracts are operating as noted.

Carol Wilson provided additional information on why the burial fund is \$70,000 over and why it fluctuates. Ms. Wilson stated that most of the deceased are coming from outside of Davidson County. If they die while in Davidson County, Metro Social Services assists with the burial, causing an increase in the burial program cost. Some vendors have increases for their services since they have not received an increase for their services in many years.

After one vendor received an increase, other vendors became aware and all the vendors requested an increase which increased expenditures.

Lisa Ricketts stated that MSS was under budget by \$413,142.00, primarily in salaries and fringe benefits. Lisa also projected that MSS will be under budget at year end.

Family Support (Giovanni Achoe and Lonnie Wade)

Giovanni Achoe provided a review of the Family Services Program. Giovanni began by stating the Adult and Family Services Program address the needs of low income Davidson County residents. Family Support offers case management services to assist customers with housing, navigating service delivery systems, maintaining housing with rent and/or utility assistance, employment and food assistance.

Giovanni also stated that there is really no eligibility criteria for our services except residence in Davidson County and be 18 years of age or older.

Family Support Services has a total of 15 case managers along with four intake workers. The Intake Workers handle the walk-in customers and the Coordinated Entry System.

Case Management includes comprehensive assessment, individual service plans, coordination of services, information, referral and resources, advocacy for direct service needs and application assistance and follow up and aftercare planning.

Lonnie Wade provided information on the Coordinated Entry program, which began in November 2015. Metro Social Services is the Coordinated Entry central hub for anyone who is homeless and that MSS will be they will contacted for services.

Some general trends that we are currently seeing in customers are as follows:

- Increase in large families (5 or more children), largest we have seen is 12
- Decrease in housing options, 4 to 5 bedrooms homes are not available
- Increase in single fathers with children (lack of shelter space)
- Increase in substance abuse
- Increase in domestic violence issues
- Large arrears and people needing assistance with large NES bills

Lonnie then spoke on the various partnerships that MSS has made to assist with some of the client needs. Partnerships include the Financial Empowerment Center, Urban Housing Solutions, Conservatorship (review of medical documents), Domestic Violence-Jean Crowe Advocacy Center, Public Library, Co-located sites (Martha O'Bryan and McGruder), Second Harvest Sites-Strategic Plan (Salvation Army, Mt. Olivet). While the Mayor's Office is not a partnership, MSS receives referrals from the Mayor's Office for which we address customer needs within 24 hours excluding weekends.

Commissioner Boehm asked if data can be captured and presented to the board each month for how many families/children were taken in and placed in centers, along with the number of calls.

Commissioner Boehm also had a question concerning the budget and whether the money from the Homemakers program could go to the families to help reduce homelessness. Renee Pratt stated that she had requested to have some of those funds to maintain the money we used for the HEROS program (helping families with school age children that are homeless) and also the Financial Assistance Fund that serves the homeless as well. Renee stated that she hopes to have an answer by the end of the week.

Lonnie Wade added that MSS Family Services has placed 105 customers in housing beginning July 1, 2015 through June 15, 2016. Lonnie stated that each case is looked at individually and each case is handled differently.

Indigent Burial (Carol Wilson)

Carol Wilson provided history on the MSS Indigent Burial Program, including an article in the Tennessean from November 28, 1988 ("With Metro aid, Needy Always Get a Proper Burial"). Carol further noted that the Metro Charter states that Metro Social Services and Board of Commissioners are responsible for burying the indigent here in Davidson County.

Carol then gave a brief introduction of the Indigent Burial Program. There is a total of 3 Social Workers that handle burial arrangements and data entry, 3 Prescreens that determines the eligibility for burial services and 1 Program Manager who handle all the daily operations/administrative.

The services are provided by 1 of the 7 funeral homes with which MSS contracts: Highland Hills, Lewis and Wright, Terrell Broady, Music City Crematory/Mortuary, Nashville Crematory/Mortuary, Tennessean Funeral Home/Cremation and Scales Funeral Home. Hills of Calvary (Ashland City Highway), provides the plots and Wilbert Vault provides the concrete box.

Nutrition (Carol Wilson)

Carol Wilson begins her report by discussing the Home Delivered Meals. The Home Delivered Meals are frozen meals, available to people at least 60 years of age, Davidson County residents and to their homes due to an illness/disability without other means of having a nutritious meal.

The Nutrition Program is staffed with 2 van drivers that deliver approximately 150 meals to customers from Monday to Friday. Other duties include reading mail, emptying trash or even putting up the food box.

The food vendor contract is with Piccadilly that supplies all the frozen and hot meals. Second Harvest is another one of our food vendors.

Next Carol Wilson discussed the Congregate Meal Sites. Congregate Meals are available to Davidson County residents at least 60 years of age with no additional requirement. Participants can choose the site they want to attend. Congregate sites are at 4 community centers (East Park, Hadley, Elizabeth and Cohn), 9 Senior High Rises (Chippington 1&2, CVT, Dandridge Towers, Hickory Hollow, Nashville Christian Towers, Old Hickory Towers, Riverwood Towers and Trevecca Towers). The Congregates sites help develop socialization skills and provide a healthy hot meal every day, to prevent isolation and to help participants become more independent. Carol also commented on the Baby Boomers – age 50-59 program that provides homebound meals using Metro funds.

Carol Wilson stated with the Congregate sites have about 50 volunteers that assist at the various sites along with the site managers.

Renee Pratt stated that we also have had the opportunity to expand our Nutrition Program to the Family Meals Program. For families that come into MSS for services and have not signed up for food stamps or are waiting to receive them, MSS provides vouchers to help feed them until the food stamps are received. Carol mentioned the liquid supplement, Ensure which is available at a reduced cost to participants.

Planning and Coordination (Dinah Gregory)

Dinah Gregory noted the two specific powers and duties from the Metro Charter that describes the duties of Planning and Coordination: "2. To make social investigations and report to the council, the selective service and other governmental agencies; 3. Engage in study and research regarding the cause of financial dependency and methods of better treating such dependency.

Dinah then went through a brief timeline for Planning and Coordination and it went as follows:

2008 an Ad Hoc Committee was appointed for Planning and Coordination was formed
2009 the Ad Hoc Committee provided MSS Board of Commissioners with recommendations such as: the need for effective data collection and analysis, report on findings and involvement with the community; and Create annual updates for community evaluation.
February 2009 Community Evaluation Subcommittee was formed to work with staff and develop a Community Needs Evaluation. The Community needs Evaluation Committee recommended secondary data sources to be included and helped design a Grassroots Community Survey.
October 2009 First Community Needs Evaluation was issued

Next Dinah Gregory provided a simple diagram showing a Cycle of Assessment and how it was used to inform people of the Community Needs Assessment. The cycle flowed as

follows: collect data, organize data, analyze data and disseminate data. This cycle has done a great job increasing the awareness and knowledge in the community of poverty.

The Community Needs Evaluation is described as market research about social/human service customers and their needs, uses the most up-to-date information, monitors and reports on trends and emerging needs and lastly promotes evidence-based practices to improve services.

Dinah Gregory then provided documentation on how the Community Needs Evaluation was used, based on user surveys conducted.

- policy and operational decisions (the foundation) of what needs to be done
- program design
- seeking grants or other funding development
- strategic planning
- working groups on issues of need
- awareness of the need
- awareness of demographic

Dinah stated that there are more people living in poverty now than ever before in the history of Davidson County. This type of poverty causes stress of all kinds that is detrimental to children and adults.

Strategic Planning (Renee Pratt and Abdelghani Barre)

Renee Pratt went over some of the content located in the Board packets. Renee and Abdelghani Barre presented a brief overview of Strategic Planning. This overview provided information on the direction for MSS to go in. Renee stated that she would like for the board to be included in the Strategic Plan Meetings to determine the direction of the agency. These meeting will be included in regularly scheduled board meetings

The two main goals that have been identified to discuss is 1) How to deal with the working poor and how we address their issues and 2) making Nashville a homeless free zone for families. Both involve helping families find jobs and look more at addressing the workforce issues. MSS needs to prepare the staff to work on these areas with the necessary resources available. Joyce Hillman will be working on these issues.

The focus is to identify where we are now, what we have to work with, where do we want to be and how do we get there. Abdelghani Barre presented a PowerPoint about the Strategic Planning Process, what is happening in the society today and how MSS can be address the needs, while implementing/evaluating and improving services.

Abdelghani Barre reported that since so much is happening in society, it is time to look and see if we are in the right place or is it time for us to move forward. Abdelghani discussed

the poverty in Davidson County and stated that 1 out of every 5 people are in poverty in Davidson County.

Those in poverty in Davidson County are Foreign-born-25%, single mothers with children under 5 are at 47% and families with 5 or more children are at 71.5%. These statistics come from the American Community Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau.

When we look at cost burdened in Davidson County, these renters and homeowners are paying more than 30% of income for housing expenses. There were 32,701 units mortgaged owners-occupied that were cost burdened. This information was found in the Cost Burdened Renters by Census Tract, which also provided the Council Districts break outs in the various districts.

Abdelghani indicated that among people who walked into Metro Social Services between July 2010 and December 2015, almost 86% were looking for housing and utilities. At least 9 out of 10 people were searching for housing/utilities assistance. For almost 10 years MSS has not had any financial assistance to provide. However, Davidson County residents in need still show up for and staff members spend a great deal of time searching for resources. Since financial assistance resources are not adequate to meet the needs in Nashville.

Abdelghani discussed affordable housing in directing that in 2006 there was an 11% rental vacancy rate and in 2014 it had dropped to 4%. This puts pressure on families that are looking for help to pay their housing expenses. This has accompanied wage declines, particularly for the bottom 10 occupations of retail sales persons, cashiers, food preparation/fast food, waiters/waitresses, janitors, personal care aides, cooks, housekeeping/maids, food preparation workers and home health aides.

Family poverty by the number of children shows that families with 5 or more children had the highest rate of poverty at 71.5% in 2014 with the lowest for families with no child at 5.1%. There were almost 30,000 single mother households in Davidson County in 2014, with 44.9% of them in poverty. Families with children experience the highest level of poverty creating hardships.

Abdelghani Barre stated two other trends in this community with one of them being the number of incarcerated black men. The reason this is so important is when these men are released from prison, they do not have a driver's license. As a result they cannot apply for jobs, so they do not have any income. The person may move into the house with a family member or someone else, which increase the poverty in the household. The other trend is the increase in payday loan establishments, usually located in the low income communities. When someone borrows money from these establishments, it is hard to get out of debt due to the high interest rates penalties and fees involved.

Abdelghani then referred back to the MSS Performance Audit in 2002, when the budget was \$13 million with 295 employees. While the budget was going down, many people were still asking for services. So looking at where MSS is today, with \$6 million with 77 employees, suggesting the question as to whether MSS is going the wrong direction.

While Davidson County is growing, MSS is getting smaller, but is still trying to serve the Davidson County residents in need.

Next, Abdelghani mentioned the Financial Assistance Coalition group that was founded about 3 years ago. These are several organizations assist families with rent and utilities. These organizations cannot meet the needs that are presented to them because most families present \$900 to \$1,000 request and the maximum that can be paid is usually \$350.

Renee commented that MSS need to rebrand itself. Renee's goal for the organization over the past 6 to 7 years was to make MSS relevant to the city, so that people will understand what MSS does and the direction in which to move. Seeing all the issues and concerns just presented, MSS need to rebrand and consider how to strategically plan.

Renee stated a new plan will be developed to identify purpose/priorities, adopt evidence-based models consistent with purpose/priorities, develop incentives to promote continuity with clients beyond a short-term basis in order to obtain data for outcomes, evaluate MSS personnel adequacy, provide training, review, evaluate and formalize partnerships.

The next steps will involve the board over the next few months with their steps:

- Review MSS Mission, Vision, Values and Charter Mandates
- Revamp MSS Data System
- Develop demographic and socioeconomic profile of MSS customers
- Engage the community about trends that are forcing changes in the paradigm/framework for meeting needs
- Promote/facilitate community response to the hardships of people in poverty

Renee asked the Board if they could commit to finding a better way to serve customers and develop them so they can become a part of the workforce and better maintain their families and their livelihood.

Renee stated that the plan is to go back and, with assistance from staff, complete the work that has been identified. The approach will be inclusive with the various organizations along with making MSS staff more knowledge about what they do every day.

A timeline will be prepared by MSS along with the board, and Renee would like to make this a component of the board meetings. Renee felt that if the Commission is better informed on the Mayor's issues, the issues in the Community and receives the data to back up the issues, then the Board has a voice to go directly to the Mayor.

Renee stated that she will provide the board with a description of the Camilla Caldwell fund after the meeting. Renee also stated that we can provide information on why the funds were created and the restrictions/limitations regarding the fund.

Director's Performance Evaluation

Commissioner Harris began by making sure all Commissioner's had an opportunity to review the Director's Performance Evaluation and if anyone had any questions. A question was asked concerning the Director's Annual Performance Evaluation and if this is a requirement of Metro Government.

Commissioner Harris commented the Metro Social Services Board of Commissioners Nominating/Personnel Committee has approved the Director's Performance Evaluation and now it is time for the board to approve.

In response to a question about whether funds are involved with this vote, Commissioner Harris commented that it will be an amount the same as the 3% across the board in which all Metro's Government employees receive.

A motion was made to approve Metro Social Services Director's Performance Evaluation for 2016. The motion properly moved and seconded and accepted unanimously.